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## Daniel Sloss Brings Young, Scottish and Blustery to New York



Daniel Sloss, 25, makes his solo New York comedy debut Tuesday at SoHo Playhouse.

CASSANDRA GIRALDO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

By **ELISE CZAJKOWSKI**

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For his first stand-up shows in New York City, the Scottish comedian [Daniel Sloss](#) plans to begin his set with a joke that didn't go over well in Indianapolis. The bit, touching on his atheism and aversion to religion, actually caused almost half of his audience to walk out. Yet he's hoping to "try it again and explain what I was trying to say the first time."

Mr. Sloss is clearly not afraid to test boundaries, and he's eager to endear himself to American audiences with "Dark," his 90-minute show opening on Tuesday for a

five-night run at the [SoHo Playhouse](#). The challenge, however, is getting people to take a gamble on a comic who is relatively unknown in the United States, he said recently over breakfast in SoHo.

An established comedian in Britain, Mr. Sloss has had a few gigs in the United States and has appeared several times on “Conan,” Conan O’Brien’s late-night show on TBS. He began doing stand-up in Scotland at 16, and within a couple of years found immense success, appearing on numerous television series (including the panel show [“8 Out of 10 Cats”](#) and a stand-up show called [“Michael McIntyre’s Comedy Roadshow”](#)).

“I got very lucky very early on,” he said. “People wanted to be the first one to discover me, to put me on TV.”



Daniel Sloss at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2015. A booker for “Conan” noticed him there one year.  
JILL FURMANOVSKY

By 21, he said, his career “was just going up and up and up and up,” but he found himself bored and unhappy with his TV-safe material. He was drawn to darker, more nuanced stand-up and to the idea of “saying something I clearly don’t believe and then trying to justify it onstage,” he said, citing the American comic Bill Burr

and the Australian stand-up Jim Jefferies as examples. “That’s the sort of comedy I enjoyed.”

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Mr. Sloss switched gears, avoiding most British television and, in some cases, repelling the audience he had built. “I didn’t like the route it was going down,” he said. “People were coming and getting offended by what I said, and I realized it wasn’t because I was saying anything offensive; it was because I was talking to people who’d watched daytime TV, who would get offended by anything. That wasn’t the audience that I wanted.”

Turning your back on a devoted audience is an audacious move, but Mr. Sloss has quite a bit of confidence; it’s one of the strongest elements of his stand-up. His onstage persona is full of blustery bravado, but, he said, “there’s always a bit where I’m fully aware that I’m full of” it. He added: “I’m 25. I didn’t go to university. I’m not smart. I don’t read as much as I should. Let’s just take everything I say with a pinch of salt.”

In person, he is charming and chatty, dressed in jeans and a scuffed black pea coat with a missing button. He has a propensity for casual swearing and an accent that he worries Americans won’t understand. (He’s working on slowing down his delivery onstage.)

Earlier in his career, his material was slightly cheeky but not controversial, with inoffensive jokes about dating and living with his parents. His age was another selling point of his act; he seemed to have been packaged as a young, shaggy-haired comic with a boy band member’s appeal.

Now he explores more substantive topics, delving often into religion, gay rights and explicit sexual themes. He has a knack for mixing these sensitive topics with an appealing silliness, as he did in his most recent “Conan” set, which is entirely about animal sexuality and is, by turns, dirty, sweet and clever. (His insights into spider reproduction will have you thinking differently about Spider-Man.)

It was in 2013, while performing his fourth show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, that he was spotted by J. P. Buck, who books the stand-up performers for “Conan.” “I was just instantly really impressed,” Mr. Buck said in a telephone interview. “I felt that he had this relatability that would translate to a U.S. audience.”

Mr. Sloss has since appeared on “Conan” five times. “It’s rare for someone to come back that often,” Mr. Buck said. “I would say it’s a testament to his talent, as well as his work ethic, in that he has just a vast catalog of material to draw from.”

The spots also led to a development deal with Mr. O’Brien’s production company, Conaco, a process that Mr. Sloss said had been educational. He is interested in working in television in the United States, but not in committing full time to a career in here, particularly given the global possibilities for stand-up. In the past few years, he has toured continental Europe, selling out shows in central and eastern European countries like Lithuania, Estonia and Slovakia. The fans, he said, are devoted followers of American and British comedy online, and familiar with his “Conan” appearances.

Like many young comics, he has grown up in an era saturated with American comedy mythos, and he is excited by the prospect of playing clubs like the Comedy Cellar “and all these places that I’ve read about in the books and heard about in the podcasts.” But he knows breaking into the American scene will be hard, even for someone with so much success. “This is the first circuit,” he acknowledged, “that I might not be able to just walk on into.”

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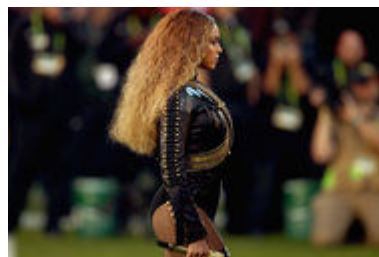
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